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E.O. 12356: DECL:OADR
 TAGS: MASS, PREL, CE, IN
 SUBJECT: U.S.-SRI LANKA: CONGRESSMAN ADDABBO
 STATEMENTS, NAVY VISITORS TO U.S.

REF: (NOTAL)

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1. CONFIDENTIAL - ENTIRE TEXT.
2. THIS MESSAGE PROVIDES BACKGROUND FOR INFO ADDRESSEES AND PRESS GUIDANCE FOR ALL ON SOME CURRENT ISSUES IN U.S.-SRI LANKA RELATIONS. NOTE THAT PRESS GUIDANCE IS ONLY FOR USE ON AN IF ASKED BASIS, AND DEPARTMENT ASKS POSTS TO INFORM DEPARTMENT BY IMMEDIATE CABLE IF THE GUIDANCE IS USED.
3. BACKGROUND: SEVERAL EVENTS AND REPORTS HAVE COINCIDED AND RAISED INCREASED SPECULATION ABOUT THE NATURE OF THE U.S. RELATIONSHIP WITH SRI LANKA. THEY ARE: THE SIGNING OF A VOA AGREEMENT RENEWAL, AND THE START OF A NEW PEACE CORPS PROGRAM IN SRI LANKA, BOTH IN LATE 1983; THE WHITE HOUSE ANNOUNCEMENT ON FEBRUARY 13 THAT PRESIDENT J. R. JAYEWARDENE WILL MAKE A STATE VISIT TO THE U.S. JUNE 18; AND STATEMENTS BY CONGRESSMAN JOSEPH ADDABBO IN COLOMBO IN JANUARY AND IN WASHINGTON IN FEBRUARY THAT THE U.S. WILL INCREASE MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO SRI LANKA.
4. IN ADDITION: TWO SRI LANKA NAVY OFFICERS, INCLUDING CHIEF OF STAFF COMMODORE H. A. SILVA, ARE IN WASHINGTON (FEB 11-17) FOR CONSULTATIONS WITH DOD AND U.S. NAVY. BOTH THE USG AND GSL HOPE FOR A LOW PROFILE FOR THE VISIT, AND NO RPT NO PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT WILL BE MADE BY EITHER GOVERNMENT. THE GSL LAST YEAR ASKED FOR USG ASSISTANCE IN IDENTIFYING, FOR THE GSL TO PURCHASE, NAVAL VESSELS TO EXPAND SRI LANKA'S COASTAL PATROL CAPABILITIES. THE REQUEST WAS NOT FOR FUNDING ASSISTANCE, BUT ONLY FOR TECHNICAL ADVICE ON THE GSL'S PLANS FOR COASTAL PATROL, AND ASSISTANCE IN FINDING APPROPRIATE VESSELS FOR GSL PURCHASE. PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE OF THIS VISIT, OF COURSE, LIKELY WOULD INCREASE

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SPECULATION ABOUT THE BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP.

4. CONGRESSMAN JOSEPH ADDABBO OF THE DEFENSE SUBCOMMITTEE, HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS, LED CODEL ADDABBO TO SRI LANKA JANUARY 12-13 AND WHILE IN COLOMBO SPOKE BY PHONE WITH A SRI LANKAN JOURNALIST. THE COLOMBO NEWSPAPER "THE SUN" RAN A STORY ON THE INTERVIEW AND QUOTED CONGRESSMAN ADDABBO AS SAYING THAT THE GSL ASKED THE USG FOR MILITARY ASSISTANCE, THAT THE CONGRESSMAN WOULD PROPOSE NEW MILITARY ASSISTANCE SPENDING TO HELP SRI LANKA, AND THAT THE USG WAS CONSIDERING HELPING SRI LANKA ACQUIRE A SHIP TO PROTECT ITS COAST FROM AGGRESSORS, WHOM THE CONGRESSMAN DID NOT IDENTIFY.

5. THE CONGRESSMAN WAS APPROACHED IN WASHINGTON BY A JOURNALIST FOR THE "ASIAN MONITOR" (A WEEKLY PUBLICATION AIMED AT THE SOUTH ASIAN COMMUNITY RESIDENT IN THE U.S.) AND ASKED IF THE REPORT OF HIS STATEMENTS IN "THE SUN" WAS CORRECT. ADDABBO CONFIRMED THE REPORT AND REITERATED THAT THE USG WOULD HELP THE GSL WITH MILITARY ASSISTANCE. THIS WAS REPORTED IN THE NEW YORK PUBLICATION "ASIAN MONITOR" IN ITS FEB 10 ISSUE (FULL TEXT PROVIDED SEPTEL).

6. DEPARTMENT OFFICERS SPOKE WITH MEMBERS OF THE CONGRESSMAN'S STAFF (THE CONGRESSMAN LEFT WASHINGTON AFTER SPEAKING WITH THE ASIAN MONITOR REPORTER), WHO SAID THAT THEY WERE NOT INFORMED BY DEPARTMENT OR EMBASSY COLOMBO THAT THE ISSUE OF THE GSL REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE WAS A SENSITIVE MATTER. DEPARTMENT OFFICERS REFERRED TO THE BRIEFING MATERIALS GIVEN TO THE CODEL BEFORE DEPARTURE, WHICH STATED THAT USG SECURITY ASSISTANCE TO SRI LANKA IS A SENSITIVE MATTER IN THE SOUTH ASIAN REGION. DEPARTMENT INFORMED THE STAFF THAT THERE ARE INACCURACIES IN THE CONGRESSMAN'S STATEMENTS ABOUT THE GSL REQUEST AND USG PLANS TO GIVE AID, THAT THE ISSUE IS SENSITIVE, AND THAT THE DEPARTMENT WILL USE PRESS GUIDANCE THAT IN PART CONTRADICTS THE CONGRESSMAN'S STATEMENTS. DEPARTMENT INFORMED THE STAFF AGAIN OF THE LIMITED USG SECURITY ASSISTANCE TO SRI LANKA (\$150,000 IMET IN FY84, \$2 MILLION FMS CREDITS AVAILABLE FOR SEVERAL YEARS BUT NEVER USED AND STILL AVAILABLE), AND THAT THERE IS NO PLAN FOR NEW OR INCREASED SECURITY ASSISTANCE.

7. THE REPORT IN THE ASIAN MONITOR, TITLED "REQUEST FOR ARMS AID CONFIRMED" SAID THAT THE GSL NEEDS FUNDS URGENTLY "TO PROTECT SRI LANKA AGAINST EXTERNAL ASSAULTS," AND THAT ADDABBO SAID HE WOULD "PUSH FOR COLOMBO'S REQUEST FOR A NAVAL VESSEL AND MODERN TRAINING FOR SRI LANKAN PERSONNEL." DEPARTMENT EXPECTS THE ASIAN MONITOR REPORT WILL BE REPEATED IN PUBLICATIONS OF INDIA, SRI LANKA, AND THE REGION.

9. IF QUESTIONS ARE NOT RAISED ABOUT THE SRI LANKA NAVY VISIT BEFOREHAND, DEPARTMENT NEVERTHELESS WILL INFORM THE EMBASSY OF INDIA OF THE VISIT SOMETIME AFTER THE VISITORS DEPART FEBRUARY 17. THIS WILL BE IN THE CONTEXT OF OTHER INFORMATION ABOUT USG-GSL RELATIONS, ESPECIALLY THE UPCOMING STATE VISIT, AND AS A FOLLOW-ON TO INDIAN EMBASSY CHARGE SINAI'S FEBRUARY 9 DISCUSSION WITH DAS SCHAFER (STATE 42383). WE HAVE TAKEN THE FACTORS RAISED IN COLOMBO 0660 (NOTAL) INTO CONSIDERATION IN DECIDING ON THIS APPROACH.

10. PRESS GUIDANCE, FOR USE ONLY ON AN IF ASKED BASIS. POSTS SHOULD INFORM DEPARTMENT BY IMMEDIATE CABLE IF GUIDANCE IS USED ON THE SUBJECT OF THE SRI LANKA NAVY VISIT TO THE U.S.

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Q: HAVE SRI LANKAN NAVY OFFICERS JUST VISITED THE U.S.? DID THEIR VISIT CONCERN A GSL REQUEST FOR NAVAL VESSELS (MENTIONED BY CONGRESSMAN ADDABBO IN STATEMENTS TO THE PRESS)?

A: TWO SRI LANKA NAVY OFFICERS VISITED THE U.S. IN FEBRUARY. THE U.S. NAVY WAS PLEASED TO RECEIVE THEM, AND TO SHOW ITS APPRECIATION THAT U.S. NAVY VESSELS ARE ALLOWED TO MAKE PORT CALLS IN SRI LANKA. OTHER SRI LANKA NAVY OFFICERS HAVE VISITED THE U.S. IN THE PAST, INCLUDING SOME WHO HAVE UNDERTAKEN TRAINING THROUGH THE IMET PROGRAM.

SRI LANKA HAS A LONG STANDING INTEREST IN UPGRADING ITS CAPABILITIES TO INTERDICT ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION AND SMUGGLING, TO PATROL SRI LANKA'S EXCLUSIVE ECONOMIC ZONE, AND TO PREVENT THE MOVEMENT BY SEA OF RADICAL SEPARATISTS TO COMMIT ACTS OF TERRORISM IN SRI LANKA. WE UNDERSTAND THE GSL OVER THE YEARS HAS CONSULTED A NUMBER OF COUNTRIES ABOUT WAYS TO DO THIS. IN THE DISCUSSIONS IN WASHINGTON THE U.S. NAVY OFFERED COMMENTS ON CURRENT SRI LANKAN THINKING ABOUT UPGRADING PATROL CAPABILITIES.

Q: DID THE GSL ASK THE U.S. TO PROVIDE A NAVY VESSEL TO SRI LANKA?

A: NO. THE GSL IS EXAMINING OPTIONS TO INCREASE THE CAPABILITIES OF ITS NAVY IN THOSE AREAS JUST DESCRIBED. ULTIMATELY IT MAY DECIDE TO PURCHASE ADDITIONAL SEACRAFT, INCLUDING FROM THE U.S., AND IN THAT EVENT, IT MIGHT CHOOSE TO USE FOR SUCH A PURCHASE THE \$2 MILLION FMS CREDIT WHICH HAS BEEN AVAILABLE BUT UNUSED FOR TWO YEARS.

Q: WHAT ABOUT THE STATEMENT BY CONGRESSMAN ADDABBO THAT HE WOULD PUSH FOR MORE U.S. SECURITY ASSISTANCE TO SRI LANKA?

A: CONGRESS IS AN INDEPENDENT PART OF GOVERNMENT IN THE U.S., AND A CONGRESSMAN CAN PROPOSE ASSISTANCE SPENDING IF HE CHOOSES. WE HAVE SEEN THE PRESS ACCOUNTS ABOUT STATEMENTS BY THE CONGRESSMAN THAT HE WILL PROPOSE NEW MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO SRI LANKA, BUT WE DO NOT KNOW WHAT HE HAS IN MIND. THE USG HAS HAD FOR SOME TIME A MODEST IMET PROGRAM FOR SRI LANKA, AND THE FMS CREDIT JUST MENTIONED IS AVAILABLE, BUT THERE IS NO PLAN FOR OTHER SECURITY ASSISTANCE OR SECURITY RELATIONSHIPS. SHULTZ

END OF MESSAGE

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